

REMARKS**Rejection of Claim 18 Under 35 U.S.C. §112, Second Paragraph**

Claim 18 stands rejected under 35 USC §112, second paragraph as being indefinite for failing to point out and claim the subject matter. In particular, the Examiner states that the claim claims both an apparatus and a method. Claim 18 has been rephrased to make it clear that claim 18 is a method claim utilizing the apparatus of claim 1. Claim 18 does not claim both, but instead is a proper dependent claim. "The fact that the independent and dependent claims are in different statutory classes does not, in itself, render the latter improper. Thus, if claim 1 recites a specific product, a claim for the method of making the product of claim 1 in a particular manner would be a proper dependent claim since it could not be infringed without infringing claim 1." See M.P.E.P. §608.01(n)(I). In light of this, Applicant submits that the rejection of claim 18 should be withdrawn.

Rejection of Claims 1-11, 13, 16-18 Under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Trutwin and Baum

Claims 1-11, 13 and 16-18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,202,380 to Trutwin in view of U.S. Patent No. 1,585,960 to Baum.

The present invention is directed to a baseboard assembly having a base portion and a top portion that interact to form an overall assembly. The base portion has a back surface that is positioned against a wall and an upper surface that is sloped. A top portion is then positioned above the base portion such that its sloped lower surface interacts with the sloped upper surface of the base portion and the top portion is retained in position. A key benefit of this invention is that the base portion may be positioned by placing it snugly against the wall and nailed into position. The wall above the base portion may then be painted prior to installation of the top portion. The top portion is then installed very simply by placing it above the bottom portion and pressing it snugly into position. It should be noted that the base portion is easily positionable since the back surface is placed in contact with the wall. As such, it installs without measuring or spacing it from the base of the wall. Also, the sloped engagement surfaces allow the top portion to fit to the base portion and adjust to the space available. Exact positioning is not critical to the fit.

The Trutwin reference is directed to solving a completely different problem, defining an electrical passage in a baseboard, and consequently has a different structure and function. Trutwin

does not contemplate the painting-related benefits of a two piece baseboard and consequently does not appreciate the corresponding benefit of a sloped interconnection. Unlike the present invention, the design in Trutwin would require a very precise positioning of the upper piece in order that it is received in the lower piece. Also, the Trutwin design would be substantially more difficult and expensive to manufacture, since the two pieces cannot be cut from a single piece of wood without substantial waste, and the size and positioning of various features would be critical to the function of the overall design.

As noted by the Examiner, Trutwin does not teach or suggest sloped surfaces, as in the present invention. The Examiner relies on the Baum reference to address this shortcoming. Applicant disagrees with this combination on several grounds.

Applicant recognizes that the recent KSR case takes a more expansive approach to determining obviousness, and that the Patent Office has put forth a number of rationales for establishing a Prima Facie case of obviousness. However, each rationale for obviousness still requires that the combination meet certain requirements, including a nexus between the factual findings and the conclusion of obviousness. It is not proper to use hindsight based on Applicant's disclosure to assemble the necessary elements from the prior art. "A factfinder should be aware, of course, of the distortion caused by hindsight bias and must be cautious of arguments reliant upon *ex post* reasoning." *KSR International Co. v. Teleflex Inc.*, 82 USPQ2d 1385, 1397 (2007) (citing *Graham*, 383 U.S. at 36).

The Examiner states that the substitution of part of Baum into Trutwin "would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art as a matter of functional equivalence" (December 26, 2007 Office Action page 4, lines 9-11) (emphasis added). This rationale appears to be based on the statement in KSR that "when a patent claims a structure already known in the prior art that is altered by the mere substitution of one element for another known in the field, the combination must do more than yield a predictable result." *KSR* at 1395 (citing *United States v. Adams*, 383 US 39, 50-51 (1966)).

Most new inventions, especially in the mechanical arts, may be seen as mere combinations of existing elements. However, such a view suggests that everything is obvious. Clearly, this is not the case. To establish obviousness, the court in KSR required that the modification of the prior art amount to a "mere substitution of one element for another" and that this mere substitution result in a

“predictable result”. Applicant respectfully submits that the combination put forth by the Examiner does not meet these requirements.

The Examiner’s suggested combination is not a mere substitution. To qualify as a mere substitution, the element being substituted would necessarily have to be used in the same way as in the original reference, keeping in mind its function and context. The Baum baseboard design is intended to reduce the stack-up between shoe molding and baseboard by providing a beveled lower surface on the baseboard and nesting the shoe mold into this beveled area. As explained in the text of the Baum reference, the baseboard itself is installed first with the shoe mold 7 being installed thereafter. As shown clearly in Figure 2, the shoe mold is a very small beveled piece without a back surface that contacts the wall. As will be clear to those of skill in the art, the upper baseboard piece must be very accurately positioned so that the shoe mold 7 fits in the available space and functions as intended. When positioned as intended, the entire shoe mold is spaced from the wall, thereby leaving a gap. If Baum and Trutwin were to be combined by mere substitution, the combination would not provide the elements of the present invention. Trutwin, like many baseboard designs, would typically be used with shoe molding. If one of skill in the art were to combine Trutwin and Baum, the logical combination would be to cut off the bottom of the lower portion of Trutwin baseboard and use a nested shoe molding like the one shown in Baum, thereby eliminating a traditional shoe molding. Baum could be used with Trutwin, or even with the present invention, but such combined use would lead to elimination of a traditional shoe molding, not to providing sloped surfaces of upper and lower pieces as defined in the present invention.

Looked at another way, a combination of Trutwin and Baum does not result in a “predictable result” of having a sloped engagement between upper and lower portions as in the present invention. The “predictable result” would be to eliminate the shoe molding that would normally be used with Trutwin and to nest such a shoe mold into the bottom of Trutwin.

While the present invention is simple, the prior art does not show the combination of elements claimed. Further, the combination suggested by the Examiner does not amount to a mere substitution resulting in a predicable result. Instead, it appears that the Examiner has used the teachings of the present invention to combine features from prior art.

The Examiner also appears to rely on the traditional “teaching, suggestion, motivation” or TSM rationale for the combination of Trutwin and Baum. The Examiner states that the

combination would be obvious “because Trutwin discloses that the invention is not limited to the details of construction and arrangement of components and is capable of other embodiments” (December 26, 2007 Office Action page 4, lines 12-15). Applicant submits that this boilerplate language is insufficient to suggest or motivate one of skill in the art to modify Trutwin in the specific way necessary to meet the present claim limitations or to provide the dissimilar function and benefits of the present invention. As discussed previously, even if Trutwin and Baum were to be combined, the combination would not provide the elements of the present invention. Trutwin, like many baseboard designs, would typically be used with shoe molding. If one of skill in the art were to combine Trutwin and Baum, the logical combination would be to cut off the bottom of the lower portion of Trutwin baseboard and use a nested shoe molding like the one shown in Baum, thereby eliminating a traditional shoe molding. Baum could be used with Trutwin, or even with the present invention, but such combined use would lead to elimination of a traditional shoe molding, not to providing sloped surfaces of upper and lower pieces as defined in the present invention.

For at least the above reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that each of the rejected claims is allowable over the cited references.

Rejection of Claim 12 Under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Trutwin, Baum and Pinto

Claim 12 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,202,380 to Trutwin in view of U.S. Patent No. 1,585,960 to Baum, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,189,276 to Pinto. Applicant again respectfully disagrees. All of the above arguments apply to this rejection. In light of this, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 12 is in condition for allowance, along with all other pending claims.

Summary

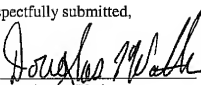
In view of the above remarks, Appellant submits that all pending claims are in condition for allowance and therefore respectfully requests reconsideration and allowance of the pending claims.

Questions may be directed to Appellants' below-signed representative at the telephone and/or facsimile numbers provided below.

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Respectfully submitted,

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